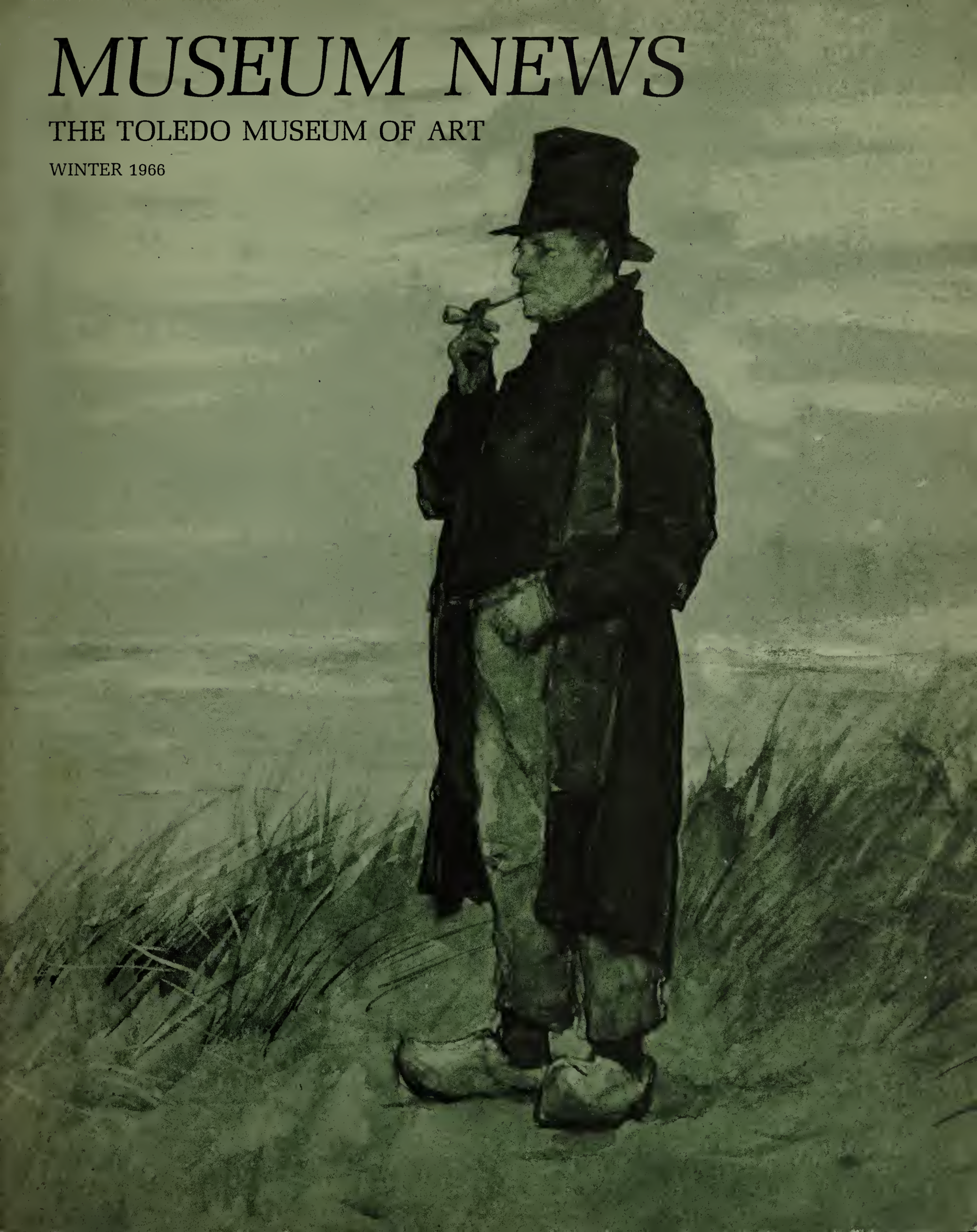
MUSEUM NEWS

THE TOLEDO MUSEUM OF ART

WINTER 1966



Toledo's Collection of Mauve

Nearly 100 drawings by Anton Mauve (1838-1888) were purchased by the Museum in 1922 from a Dutch dealer, Jan Kleykamp. The firm of Kleykamp was active in the international art market from the turn of the century until 1935. The family specialized in Oriental objects and eventually opened a branch in New York as well as The Hague. It is presumed that Jan Kleykamp was a son of the founder of the firm, Pieter Kleykamp. He emigrated to this country and settled for a year, 1922, in Detroit. Here he operated a gallery with Stanley M. Carper who dealt in paintings, etchings, mezzotints, and picture frames. Presumably the museum purchased the drawings during that year. The drawings entered the collection and were never publicly displayed until this year. A few came from the personal collection of Edward Drummond Libbey.

The family of Anton Mauve conducted two sales in 1917 of the works in oil and those drawings among sketchbooks which were discovered in the painter's studio after his death in 1888. However, not all of the pictures were sold at this time and the Mauve family retained many works. The Kleykamp firm probably acquired the drawings as a lot directly from the Mauve heirs sometime between the sales and 1922.

The exhibition, *Drawings and Watercolors by Anton Mauve,* was held in conjunction with the Ford Foundation Museum Training Program. The drawings were professionally restored and then were catalogued by John W. Keefe, Ford Foundation Intern. Mr. Keefe holds fine arts degrees from Yale University, and his major interest is the art of the 19th century.

Otto Wittmann, Director

Museum News

THE TOLEDO MUSEUM OF ART
Founded by Edward Drummond Libbey

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(Cover) Anton Mauve (1838-1888) *Retired Sailor Smoking on the Dunes.* Watercolor. 12 x 8½ inches. Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey. 25.879.

DRAWINGS AND WATERCOLORS OF

Anton Mauve

To critics of today looking at the history of Dutch painting, the 17th century seems to be the highest aesthetic point reached by the artists of Holland. However, in the second half of the 19th century, a small group of painters, most of whom eventually settled around The Hague, known as the "Hague School" was world-famous and considered to have revived the splendors of Dutch art. Their pictures were among the most prized art objects of the period. The popularity of these artists continued until the rejection of Victorian painting in the 1920's. Only now has the present generation begun to re-evaluate these works. Among the most renowned of these Hague School artists was Anton Mauve (1838-1888).

In order to understand and appreciate the work of Mauve, it is necessary to look at the Hague School in an historical context. Dutch art has always been characterized by a love of realism, and nothing has attracted the artist of the Netherlands more than depiction of the life which he saw around him. Only in the 1830's did this national strain become diluted by foreign influences. The French Academy then ruled the art world and all artists produced the elegant and affected works which academic taste dictated. In Holland a reaction against the imported style began in the 1850's and the Dutch artist again accepted nature as it appeared before him.

This resurgence of interest in naturalistic interpretation was, however, influenced again by France. A number of French artists had also tired of the artificial and idealized expression demanded by the Academy and forsook their studies in favor of painting in the countryside. These French artists became known as the "Barbizon School" since they settled around the town of Barbizon near Paris. This school was interested in the everyday life of the peasants around the town and in the faithful rendering of nature. During these early years of the Barbizon School, a Dutch artist, William Roelofs (1822-1897) visited France and had become friendly with the young artists at Barbizon. Roelofs returned to found the Free Society of Fine Arts in Brussels; this society included the leading painters of Barbizon as honorary members and became the mouthpiece for the new non-academic ideals of young Dutch artists.

The contact with the new French school and the Society awakened

these artists to the fact that some of the greatest artists of the Netherlands, the great men such as Rembrandt, had painted the woods, fields, and peasants in the 17th century. The movement might have remained restricted to the artists themselves and would have received little recognition had it not been for the fact that Josef Israëls (1824-1911), an artist who had already achieved a reputation as a painter of historical scenes on a grand scale, renounced French-inspired classicism in 1857. In that year he exhibited *Children by the Sea,* an uncomplicated picture of ordinary children playing on the beach. The simple charm of the composition appealed to a Victorian world which was finding itself increasingly caught up by rapid industrialization, and suddenly the Hague School was fashionable and famous. The work of its artists was enthusiastically received by both critics and the public.

In spite of the important formative influence of the Barbizon School, the painters of the new Hague School soon developed an art whose character was distinctly Dutch. These men discovered that the life of the common laborer could convey as much feeling as that of great classical figures. They realized also the effect of the flat Dutch landscape stretching to the horizon and to this they imparted a special feeling. The Hague School painters were acutely aware of varying weather conditions and atmosphere of their country; perhaps no other painters have been so capable of capturing the wet, silver atmosphere of Holland. Each artist had his favorite subject matter, but all dealt with everyday life and the Netherlands landscape. By 1870, the school had developed its characteristic expression and its most famous members were Josef Israëls, the Maris Brothers, Johannes Bosboom, and Anton Mauve.

Anton Mauve was born in 1838 at Zaandam, a small ship-building town, where his father was a clergyman. The boy soon showed a talent for drawing and wished to become an artist, to which his family strongly objected. As he grew older, this skill developed and the boy persisted in his desire to become a painter. The father finally agreed to withdraw his opposition if Anton would first take a diploma as a drawing master so that he could earn a living by giving lessons, should he be unable to sell his own pictures.

Mauve entered the studio of P. F. Van Os (1808-1860), a minor Dutch painter then noted for his pictures of cattle, but found his apprenticeship difficult, for he held very strong opinions about drawing, and these did not always agree with those of his master. Van Os was influential, however, in urging Mauve to draw from

nature. His own pictures were not in accord with the fashionable academic taste of the era and did not sell. Mauve compromised and painted small conventional pictures simply to make a meagre living. These were carefully drawn, highly finished paintings, often of brilliant color, but they revealed nothing of the skill which was to mark his later work. His next teacher was W. Verschuur (1812-1874), another minor painter of landscape and horses. Mauve soon felt independent enough to make regular visits to Osterbeek where he worked from 1858-1868. Many people regarded this town as the Barbizon of Holland at that time, and it was here that the young artist met the Maris Brothers and W. Bilders who were to become his lifetime associates. These men knew of the new anti-academic movement and told Mauve of its ideals. They stressed the importance of a return to nature and an emphasis upon the common man. Presumably they also told Mauve of their interest in capturing the peculiar gray atmosphere of the Netherlands. As early as 1860, Bilders is recorded as having stated: "I am looking for a tone which we call colored gray; that is, a combination of all colors, however strong, harmonized in a way that they give the impression of a warm and fragrant gray." In 1862, Willem Maris (1844-1910) helped his young protegé to introduce reflected light into his landscapes.

Mauve soon dropped his old conventional style and studied the ideals of the new school closely. During these years he drew from nature and concentrated on cows, sheep, horses, and figures in the landscape. His draughtsmanship had always been competent and now became expert. He also became skilled in the handling of light which he saw as a silvery blonde-gray substance diffused and refracted softly by the figures in his paintings. So adept did Mauve become at this rendering of light effects that one can sense the silvery moisture-permeated atmosphere even in a chalk drawing of one color. He was not painting portraits of animals or men but wanted to show the effect of a day on which the figures appeared as an integral part of the scene.

Mauve left Osterbeek for Amsterdam in 1868 where he established himself as an artist. In 1874 he married and moved to The Hague where he joined the other painters who were coming to be known as the Hague School. When this new group soon won world recognition, the diligent studies at Osterbeek placed Mauve in the foremost ranks, and the decade from 1870-1880 marked his most mature and successful period. In 1885, Mauve moved to Laren where he founded the Laren School, a branch of the larger Hague School. Here his distant cousin, Vincent Van Gogh, came to be a

pupil. It is interesting today to note that the drawings of the more celebrated student often reflect a strong dependence upon those of the master. By this time, Anton Mauve was an artist of international reputation and had been honored with medals at the larger international exhibitions in Philadelphia, Amsterdam, Vienna, Antwerp, and Paris. Suddenly, in 1888, Mauve died at the age of fifty and was mourned by all of the artistic world.

Modern psychiatry would have called Mauve a manic-depressive, for he would periodically sink into fits of depression which would last for months and robbed him of the ability to paint. During these periods, he would walk along the canals or dunes with his sketchbook making brief drawings which sometimes became finished watercolors or paintings. As quickly as this depression appeared, it would lift and Mauve would be filled with energy and worked long hours, as if to compensate for lost time. The depressed quality of mind was important in his work for it caused the lingering feeling of melancholy which can be detected in many pictures. In much of his artistic production, there was a gentle sadness and a sympathetic understanding of the bare and humble lives of his peasant subjects.

This hint of melancholia was often combined with a sharp concentration upon one fragment of nature; many of Mauve's landscapes had a singularly intense effect about them. This was due to the fact that he frequently painted by cutting a small hole in a piece of paper and then looked through it at a selected piece of the landscape. He was thus undistracted by the surrounding area and was free to deal with one small portion. Many of the Mauve drawings in the collection of the Museum reveal this intense and concentrated observation of nature.

During the years of his greatest renown, the artistic skills of Mauve were at the zenith of their development. He had become a superb draughtsman and his coloristic sense was among the finest. Having painted in all seasons and all kinds of weather, he was expert in the handling of light and its effects. Mauve had developed an artistic expression which was his own and yet one which remained characteristically Dutch. The present generation has only begun to appreciate these achievements, and it is hoped that Anton Mauve may soon take his rightful place in the history of 19th century art.

John W. Keefe

The Woodcutter.
Watercolor.
19 x 11 7/16 inches.
Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey. 25.38

By the Shore.
Pencil.
16 7/16 x 9 15/16 inches.
22.159

Sheep and Shepherd near the Farm.
Charcoal and pencil.
14 1/4 x 21 3/16 inches.
22.113

Dutch Girl with a Staff and Pitcher.
Watercolor and pencil.
15 1/16 x 10 11/16 inches.
22.155

Dutch Girl with Basket.
Watercolor.
13 15/16 x 9 15/16 inches.
22.114

Cows in a Pasture.
Pencil, charcoal, white chalk.
18 3/4 x 11 11/16 inches. 1875.
22.115

Cow Studies.
Charcoal and pencil.
11 7/8 x 18 1/16 inches.
22.124

Studies for a Grazing Sheep.
Pencil.
4 1/4 x 7 inches.
22.171D

Figure Studies.
Charcoal.
11 1/2 x 17 13/16 inches.
22.133

Man Loading a Wheelbarrow.
Charcoal and white chalk.
17 5/8 x 11 11/16 inches.
22.163

The Horsebarn.
Pencil.
13 13/16 x 20 3/16 inches.
22.127

Woman Spinning.
Charcoal.
9 7/16 x 12 1/4 inches.
22.117

Woman Tending a Cow.
Watercolor.
9 13/16 x 13 13/16 inches.
Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey. 25.881

The Shepherd.
Charcoal.
11 5/8 x 16 7/8 inches.
22.139

Sheep on the Dunes.
Oil on canvas.
36 1/2 x 75 inches.
Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey. 25.52

Although this article is devoted to the drawings and watercolors of Anton Mauve, it is appropriate to include one of his large canvases since many of the drawings were actually studies for large oil compositions such as this example.

Woman Field Worker.
Charcoal.
9 7/8 x 11 7/8 inches.
22.146

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